

nish fuel to wood-burning packets, common soon after Audubon's time. Cypress trees then as now, likely grew only in the nearby bayous of both rivers as Audubon makes no mention of encountering any of them along the river border.

Audubon's nine miles afoot constitute the last trip on which he is known to have visited Indiana.

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### PERCIVAL BROOKS COFFIN

BY R. M. STRONG AND W. C. ALLEE

Percival Brooks Coffin was born in the small city of Richmond, Indiana, in 1865, the youngest child of a Quaker family that had for two generations strongly influenced the religious, philanthropic, and financial development of its community; he died nearby Richmond in his modest summer home, "The Brooks", on October 7, 1935, after a brief illness. His parents did not send their youngest and somewhat delicate son to public school, but taught him or had him taught at home. One of his closest friends writes: "It always seemed a bit pathetic to think of this active mischief-loving little chap not allowed to play with boys away from home, not allowed to go to public school, always tutored, sitting on the floor forming armies with spools while his parents read aloud Parkman's histories." Although his father, Charles F. Coffin, among his many other notable activities, was one of the founders of Earlham College, the boy was not sent there.

As happens to good minds denied formal school and college training, he felt a vivid sense of his loss which he was constantly alert to repair by his own efforts. In this he was so successful that in full maturity he had become one of the best and most truly educated of men.



PERCIVAL BROOKS COFFIN, 1865-1935.

The three external determining factors in Percival Coffin's life were his association with his parents and their wide range of philanthropic interests, such as prison reform, the rights of Indians and the improvement of hospitals for mental diseases; the failure of his father's bank when Percival was still a young man; and his marriage to Lucy V. Baxter, daughter of an outstanding Quaker family of Richmond, and an enthusiastic naturalist. There followed highly formative years (1894-96) at Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the beginning of Mr. Coffin's development as a naturalist in his own right. The young couple went on frequent trips into the interesting surrounding country and made acquaintance with such birds as the Woodhouse's and Piñon Jays, the Townsend's Solitaire, and other Rocky Mountain species.

Characteristically strong and lasting friendships were founded in this period. After that he moved to Chicago which was his residence for the remainder of his life. Percival Coffin's ornithological activities, aside from excursions into the country as a lover of birds and of nature in general, were largely associated with the Chicago Ornithological Society, the Wilson Ornithological Club, and the Inland Bird-Banding Association, all of which involve Lucy V. B. Coffin, whose interest in ornithology preceded his. The senior author met Mrs. Coffin as an alert and enthusiastic student in a lecture course on birds open to persons not regularly registered as students in the University of Chicago, some time before 1912.

This led to a friendship with both members of the family and they were among the first persons considered as possible members of the Chicago Ornithological Society, which was founded in 1912. They accepted the invitation and became charter members. Until ill health during the past two years took them away from Chicago, they were leading supporters of the society. They attended meetings regularly and did much more than their share of the work involved in making it a success. Both served frequently on committees and as officers of the society and they often contributed to the program. Mr. Coffin was president in 1921 and 1922; he was on the Ridgway Memorial Fund Committee in 1928; in 1920 he conferred with the Governor and both Senators of Indiana about the possibility of establishing a state park in the Indiana Dunes—a splendid project which was later accomplished.

Percival Coffin was treasurer of the Wilson Ornithological Club during the years 1914-16, inclusive. Up to that time the organization had been small and its future uncertain. The WILSON BULLETIN had been kept alive largely through the devotion and perseverance of

Professor Lynds Jones of Oberlin College. Mr. Coffin applied his unusual business ability and experience to the financial problems of the club and he had much to do with its expansion and reorganization. His sane and comprehending advice was greatly appreciated by the other officers.

He was one of the organizers of the Inland Bird-Banding Association, calling the first meeting to order and serving on the first nominating committee.

About 1918 they purchased a farm near Richmond, Indiana, which they named "the Brooks". This became a bird and plant sanctuary where they made systematic studies of the habits of birds and experiments in allowing a portion of the land to return to its natural state so far as possible. Here they spent their vacations, sometimes half of the year.

On coming to Chicago, Mr. Coffin first entered and later continued his father's office as investment banker, and relieved himself from business cares by work on civic committees of the City Club; by continuing his music; and by active interest in the Society of Friends, in which the now well-known work of the American Friends Service Committee early caught his attention and devotion. During the long, slow progress of the depression the attention of the Coffins turned more and more toward their naturalistic interests, even after the severe illness of Mrs. Coffin stopped active field observation.

An interesting result may be quoted in full from the November, 1935, issue of *Biological Abstracts* (9/9):

"COFFIN, PERCIVAL BROOKS. The eyes of birds. *Indiana Audubon Soc. Year Book*. 1933: 62-65. A general critical account, with conclusions, relating to the morphology and visual properties of birds' eyes."

Among ornithologists, bankers, college professors, farmers, and particularly among the many young people the Coffins befriended, of whom some of us, including the junior author are no longer young, Percival Brooks Coffin is remembered primarily for his friendliness, his whimsicality, his originality, and his clear-eyed, wholesome philosophy of **life**.